

# Department for Education: A world-class teaching profession

## Response by the Wellcome Trust

3 February 2015

### Key points

- We strongly support the establishment of a College of Teaching — this will transform the expertise and professional status of the teaching workforce, and ultimately improve student outcomes. We are also supportive of the collaborative Expression of Interest developed by the Prince's Teaching Institute, the College of Teachers, the Teacher Development Trust and SSAT.
- We believe that while the Department for Education (DfE) has a role in contributing funding to establish the College, it is vital that it is independent of Government and led by teachers.
- Much could be learnt from the infrastructure that underpins science teaching, including strong professional bodies and subject associations, UK-wide continuing professional development (CPD) led by the National Science Learning Network (NSLN), and the Association for Science Education's Chartered Science Teacher designation. It is vital that the College aligns with this model.
- We urge DfE to reconsider its proposal to fund professional development via Teaching Schools. We are concerned by some of the potential unintended consequences, and ask that the department takes the time to test the best delivery mechanism.

### Introduction

1. The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health by supporting bright minds in science, the humanities and social sciences. We have a long standing commitment to making inspirational, high-quality science education available to all young people, spending around £12 million each year towards this aspiration.
2. Supporting teachers and creating a strong evidence base for education is at the heart of our work. Since 2003, we have also committed £45 million of funding to the NSLN, enabling science teachers and technicians to access high-quality, evidence-based CPD. We are strong advocates for the establishment of a College of Teaching and are pleased to respond to DfE's consultation on the topic.

### General Points

3. Teaching in England does not have the professional status it deserves. The creation of a College of Teaching would provide an unprecedented opportunity to transform this; embedding evidence-based practice at the heart of the sector and facilitating access to high-quality CPD. There are many similarities between the education and medical professions — both are publicly-funded and deliver essential services that have a huge impact on people's lives. Yet teaching lacks the professional support and sector-led empowerment seen in medicine. A College of Teaching has the potential to drive real change for the workforce and deliver improvements for students.

4. We share DfE's aspiration for a world-class teaching profession and with the right leadership and sector-led motivation, this is achievable. However, the College must be given time to build stakeholder support, and test and establish the most effective infrastructure. We are supportive of the collaborative Expression of Interest developed by the Prince's Teaching Institute, the College of Teachers, the Teacher Development Trust and SSAT (The Schools Network). Having met with those driving this proposal on numerous occasions, we are impressed by their experience, engagement across the community and commitment.
5. We believe that DfE has a role in contributing funding to establish the College, and this was also the consensus view of a stakeholder meeting we hosted on behalf of the organisations outlined in point 4. However, it is vital that the College is independent of Government and led by teachers.
6. The science teaching profession is in a unique position to support the development of the new College of Teaching. This is underpinned by the strength of its subject associations and learned societies, and the infrastructure of its UK-wide professional development network, coordinated by the NSLN. There is also much to learn from the Association for Science Education's Chartered Science Teacher designation. The College must mirror this approach, bringing together relevant cross-sector expertise and support in all subject areas. The science community could also help build the critical mass of teachers required for the College to succeed.

## Consultation questions

### **What are the greatest impediments teachers and schools face in regularly undertaking high-quality professional development?**

7. We wholeheartedly agree with DfE's statement that "professional development is not something that ends after one, two or even five years in the classroom". Teachers must be motivated to learn continually and strive to improve their practice. They must recognise that CPD enhances student outcomes and enables career progression. They should also be able to identify the stage they are at on a professional development pathway and have clear and easy access to CPD.
8. We have been working with other organisations across the science community, including the NSLN, the Association for Science Education and learned societies, to outline a model for professional development — a continuous pathway where teachers build on their learning and skills to reach the next stage in their development. This should help science teachers to identify their own development needs and sign-post opportunities to meet them. Science is well placed to act as an exemplar and lead the way in this area.
9. Teachers often cite expense as a barrier to participation in CPD<sup>1</sup>. Project ENTHUSE offers bursaries for science-specific CPD delivered by the National Science Learning Centre, but on occasion still struggles to fill courses with teachers who cite a range of other barriers. Recent consultation with school leaders, teachers, technicians and partners, led by the NSLN, identified a number of barriers to participation:
  - teachers are reluctant to leave their classes, even if cover is funded, perhaps because of new links between performance and pay;
  - concerns around the quality of teaching cover;
  - school leaders are reluctant to release teachers from classrooms, preferring twilight sessions; and
  - schools are becoming more reliant on in-house and school-to-school CPD which may be tailored to specific or inspection-driven needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Teaching and Learning International Survey, 2013

10. It is a significant challenge to get senior school leaders to recognise the importance of high quality CPD, particularly if it is subject-specific or externally-delivered. This is despite a strong and growing evidence base for its impact.

**To what extent, and how, do teachers currently evaluate their professional development? What would support more rigorous evaluation?**

11. Rigorous evaluation of the impact of CPD on teachers and their students is essential if courses are to be truly effective. The National Science Learning Centre requires teachers to complete an impact report describing how learning from CPD will affect their practice and ENTHUSE bursaries are only released once this has been completed. This has helped to increase the impact of courses<sup>2</sup>.
12. The consultation talks about “evidence-based professional development”. This could come in two forms: when the teaching methods taught in the CPD are based upon evidence of their impact, or when a particular CPD course has been proven to be impactful. The latter is much more powerful but we are well aware of how expensive and complex it is to gather this evidence, especially having invested in a randomised control trial of the impact of an intensive NSLN CPD science course on primary school teachers and their students. The College of Teaching will need to reflect on what it means by evidence-based CPD.
13. The College of Teaching must also support schools to engage with research. There should be a two-way relationship between schools and researchers to build the evidence base that underpins education and ensure that the ‘teacher voice’ helps shape research questions.

**Where should the balance of responsibility lie between teachers, schools and Government for ensuring that appropriate professional development is undertaken? How in the longer term, might responsibility sit with a new independent professional body?**

14. Teachers should have an entitlement to CPD that allows them to continually progress through a professional development pathway and work towards the next stage of their careers. We hope that well-defined professional pathways, such as that being developed in science, along with the existence of a College of Teaching, will enable the government to make such a commitment to teachers in the future. In the meantime, schools must also be held to account by Ofsted and governors on whether their teachers have support and access to CPD opportunities, enabling them to fulfil their professional needs.
15. We believe it is right that the proposed standards of the College of Teaching are not mandatory. However, we envisage that a successful model will achieve universal buy-in from the teaching workforce. In the future, we hope that head teachers will look to recruit teachers who have reached the College of Teaching standard, and all teachers will aspire to achieve it. It must be a genuine benchmark for quality.

**What should the funding criteria be for Teaching Schools wishing to draw on the new funding pot for professional development? Should there, for example, be a requirement for Teaching Schools to work with a predetermined proportion of schools which are not already “good” or “outstanding”?**

16. We urge DfE to reconsider its proposal to fund professional development via Teaching Schools. It is disappointing that a direct question on the appropriateness of this proposal was not asked in the consultation.

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<sup>2</sup> Impact of professional development from the National Science Learning Centre, 2013-14

17. We are concerned by some of the potential unintended consequences of such a move. For instance, it would be important to verify that Teaching Schools understand and would promote the benefits of external subject-specific CPD compared with internal generic CPD – this is often cheaper and easier to deliver but has very different impacts. It is also important to recognise the range of CPD beyond courses, including industrial placements such as the Teacher Industrial Placement Scheme run through Project ENTHUSE. Teaching Schools already have a number of responsibilities and there is little evidence to show they are the best conduit for dissemination of evidence-based professional development.
18. It is not necessary to rush into any decisions about CPD funding at this time as the issue is independent of plans to support the College of Teaching. We ask that DfE takes the time to develop and test the best funding delivery mechanism. It is also important to ensure that subject areas that require more expensive CPD, or are more strategic, continue to receive direct funding from DfE. This includes ongoing Government support for the Science Learning Centre partnerships and Project ENTHUSE.

**Will teachers benefit from an online platform that collates and presents evidence-based practice?**

19. Teachers must be able to access research evidence, as well as a forum to contribute and discuss this, and share lessons from the implementation of interventions in their own schools. There are several new and established initiatives to better connect teachers with evidence-based practice, for instance, the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit. It will be important to understand the pros and cons of these different approaches and the benefits that a new platform would bring.

*The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. We support bright minds in science, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as education, public engagement and the application of research to medicine. Our investment portfolio gives us the independence to support such transformative work as the sequencing and understanding of the human genome, research that established front-line drugs for malaria, and Wellcome Collection, our free venue for the incurably curious that explores medicine, life and art.*